



Shelter WA Update

February 29, 2008

In this release:

HCCaLD Forum

The Housing Crisis Committee for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities (HCCCaLD) held a consultation day on Monday February 4th with sector workers, to explore the impact of the tight housing market in WA on refugee and humanitarian entrants. The forum was attended by over 30 workers and jointly facilitated by Shelter WA, Tenants Advice Service WA, WACOSS, the Edmund Rice Centre and The Community Housing Coalition of WA.

Community workers providing housing and support services for humanitarian and refugee entrants were invited to the consultation to identify gaps in service provision, achieve an inside investigation into the services currently provided to humanitarian entrants, explore successful models of service delivery and develop possible short and long term recommendations.

Refugees and humanitarian entrants are particularly affected by the lack of affordable rental housing and have additional issues that require specific tailored solutions. The consultation revealed the level of humanitarian services decreased including a decrease in dedicated housing, and shortening the length of time in secure accommodation and support services allocated to humanitarian entrants. The spread of housing locations for humanitarian entrants across the metropolitan region also makes it harder, more time consuming and costly in travel expenses for service providers to reach their client households and increases the isolation of new migrants from the support of other humanitarian entrants from the same country of origin. The future is often unknown and without the reassurance and support of others who have experienced re-settlement these factors may result in re-trauma, people feeling fearful, distressed and lacking confidence, and feelings of betrayal and helplessness in their new country.

The consultation will deliver a report outlining the recommendations arising from the day, which will be circulated.

In further news, the Equal Opportunity Commission has been approached to conduct an investigation into "the existence of discriminatory private rental policies and practices among real estate agents and private landlords against groups from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds" and has released a draft terms of reference for examination of these issues including the experiences of Aboriginal people in the private rental market.

Armadale Forum

Shelter WA was approached by the Armadale Early Years Network to contribute to an Emergency Relief and Housing Workshop at the City of Armadale Council Rooms on February 13th. Workers in government and non-government agencies had noticed an increase in families with children presenting for assistance to access housing, emergency relief and other assistance and also more children arriving at school reporting frequent changes of address, not having eaten breakfast, and not able to attend school excursions.

Shelter WA presented to the Forum on the state of housing and rental affordability in Armadale. Armadale was one of the last suburbs to be affordable in metropolitan WA and has a higher indigenous population (2.8% as compared to 2.3% across the rest of metropolitan WA).

Armadale is a low income area with the Armadale median gross household income approx \$51,428 per annum or \$989 p/week¹, compared to 2007 WA median household income of approx gross \$62,000 per annum or \$1,137 p/week defining Armadale is a low income region.

Armadale shows higher than WA metropolitan average percentage of dwellings being purchased, 44%², compared to 37% for the rest of Perth and 32% across Australia. With recent interest rate increases, this will impact largely on the 44% of people who will have to find additional money to meet the mortgage repayment increases.

The average Median House Price in the City of Armadale is \$432,540³, an increase of 24% from last year and median house prices in the City of Armadale show a 5 year average growth rate of 22% per annum⁴.

The median house price in Perth is \$450,000, revealing that Armadale is not much cheaper than Perth. The required income to purchase a median priced house in Armadale is \$130,000 revealing an approximate affordability gap of \$78,572.

In June 2006 none of Perth's 291 metropolitan suburbs were affordable to purchase for households in the bottom 40% of the income range or households in receipt of the median income.⁵

Rental vacancy rates have also declined making it harder to find a rental property and average rental increases reflect the proportional raises in house purchase prices.

The forum gained very positive feedback from everyone who attended and contributed, with representatives from the Department of Housing and Works and Centrelink giving information on their service and many non-government agencies including Financial Counsellors and Ruah Homelink told of their programs and services.

¹ ABS, ipid.

² ABS, 2006 Census QuickStats : Armadale (C) (Local Government Area), retrieved from <http://www.censusdata.abs.gov.au/ABSNavigation/prenav/ProductSelect?newproducttype=QuickStats&btnSelectProduct=View+QuickStats+%3E&collection=Census&period=2006&areacode=LGA50210&geography=&method=&productlabel=&producttype=&topic=&navmapdisplayed=true&javascript=true&breadcrumb=LP&topholder=0&leftholder=0¤taction=201&action=401&textversion=false>

³ REIWA Suburb Profile and Price September 2007, Retrieved from <http://reiwa.com/res/res-suburbprofile-display.cfm>

⁴ REIWA Suburb Profile and Price September 2007, Retrieved from <http://reiwa.com/res/res-suburbprofile-display.cfm>

⁵ Shelter WA calculation from REIWA REIWA Suburb Profile and Price, Retrieved from <http://reiwa.com/res/res-suburbprofile-display.cfm>

NEWS

Battlers find ready helpers



Bronwyn Kitching, Shelter WA, Andrea Highman, Communicare and Justine Noble, Ruah Tenancy Support. Picture: Marcelo Palacios

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AN Emergency Relief and Housing Forum held at the City of Armadale last week provided information about services in the community and discussed local issues.

Shelter WA representatives Bronwyn Kitching and Heidi Stewart discussed housing affordability issues in Armadale and WA. The lack of available housing was highlighted by the representatives of the 33 government and non-profit organisations as a big issue for their clients.

Mrs Kitching told the forum that a shortage of public housing stock, increased rents and an increase in housing affordability was having a major impact on the availability of low and middle-range rental properties.

"This results in many families not being able to find affordable rental properties and others experiencing financial stress as they struggle to maintain increases in mortgage and rents," she said.

Families experiencing financial stress were urged to contact agencies in the area that might be able to help. Financial counselling is a confidential service that can help families to manage debt and in the Armadale area is available through Armadale Information and Referral Service and Gosnells Community Legal Service. Ruah Tenancy Support is able to help families in maintaining tenancies.

The forum was co-ordinated by Andrea Highman from Communicare's Communities for Children project in Armadale on behalf of the Early Years Network.